CLAIMS

1.   A secure control system for use in controlling the operation of a device having a plurality of functions, comprising inputting fingerprint pattern data relating to a fingerprint pattern of an individual using a fingerprint pattern reader, comparing the fingerprint pattern data with stored fingerprint pattern data to identify the individual whose fingerprint pattern data has been input and to identify to which of the individual's fingers the fingerprint pattern data relates, and controlling the operation of the device in response to the data representative of the identity both of the individual and of the finger to perform a selected one of the plurality of functions.

2.   A system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the device comprises a computer system and the data representative of the identity of the individual and of the finger are used in controlling access rights.

3.   A system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the device comprises a switch mechanism and the data representative of the identity of the individual and the finger are used to determine how the switch mechanism operates and/or what is controlled by the switch mechanism.

4.   A system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the device includes a plurality of sensor regions, each sensor region having a plurality of functions associated

therewith, the function performed by the device depending upon the finger used to operate the device and which sensor region is used to input the fingerprint.

5.   A system as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising subsequently inputting second fingerprint pattern data relating to a second fingerprint pattern of the individual, comparing the second fingerprint pattern data with stored fingerprint pattern data to identify the individual whose second fingerprint pattern data has been input and to identify to which of the individual's fingers the second fingerprint pattern data relates, and controlling the operation of the device in response to the data representative of the identity both of the individual and of the finger to switch to a condition in which a second selected one of the plurality of functions can be performed.

6.   A system as claimed in Claim 5, wherein the selected one of the plurality of functions and the second selected one of the plurality of functions grant different access rights to the user.

7.   A secure data entry system comprising assigning a data character to each of a plurality of an individual's fingers, inputting fingerprint pattern data relating to a fingerprint pattern of an individual using a fingerprint pattern reader, and comparing the fingerprint pattern data with stored fingerprint data to identify the individual whose fingerprint data has been input and to identify to which of the individual's

fingers the fingerprint pattern data relates to determine which data character has been input.

8.   A system as claimed in Claim 7, wherein each data character comprises a numeric digit, and using the system to input a number.

9.   A system as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the step of comparing is repeated at least once using fresh fingerprint data to permit a multi-digit number or numeric sequence to be input.

10.   An input device comprising an array of fingerprint sensor regions, the input device outputting signals dependent upon which of a user's finger is used and which sensor region is used at a given time.

11.   An identification method comprising entering first and second pieces of biometric information, comparing data representative of the first piece of biometric information with stored data held in a first data store, comparing data representative of the second piece of biometric information with stored data held in a second data store, and operating a device using the results of the two comparisons.

12.   A method according to Claim 11, wherein one of the first and second data stores comprises a portable data store.

13.   A method according to Claim 11, wherein the first and second pieces of biometric information are entered simultaneously.

14.   A method according to Claim 11, wherein the first and second pieces of biometric information form parts of a single biometric characteristic.

15.   A method according to Claim 14, wherein the single biometric characteristic comprises one of a fingerprint pattern and an iris pattern.

16.   A method according to Claim 11, wherein the first and second pieces of biometric information are entered sequentially.